



## FTAA-2512-1152: Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

### Project Name: Ngā Wairau – Stage 1

Date submitted:	13 January 2026	Tracking #: BRF-00060	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	<b>Action sought:</b>	<b>Response by:</b>
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	20 January 2026

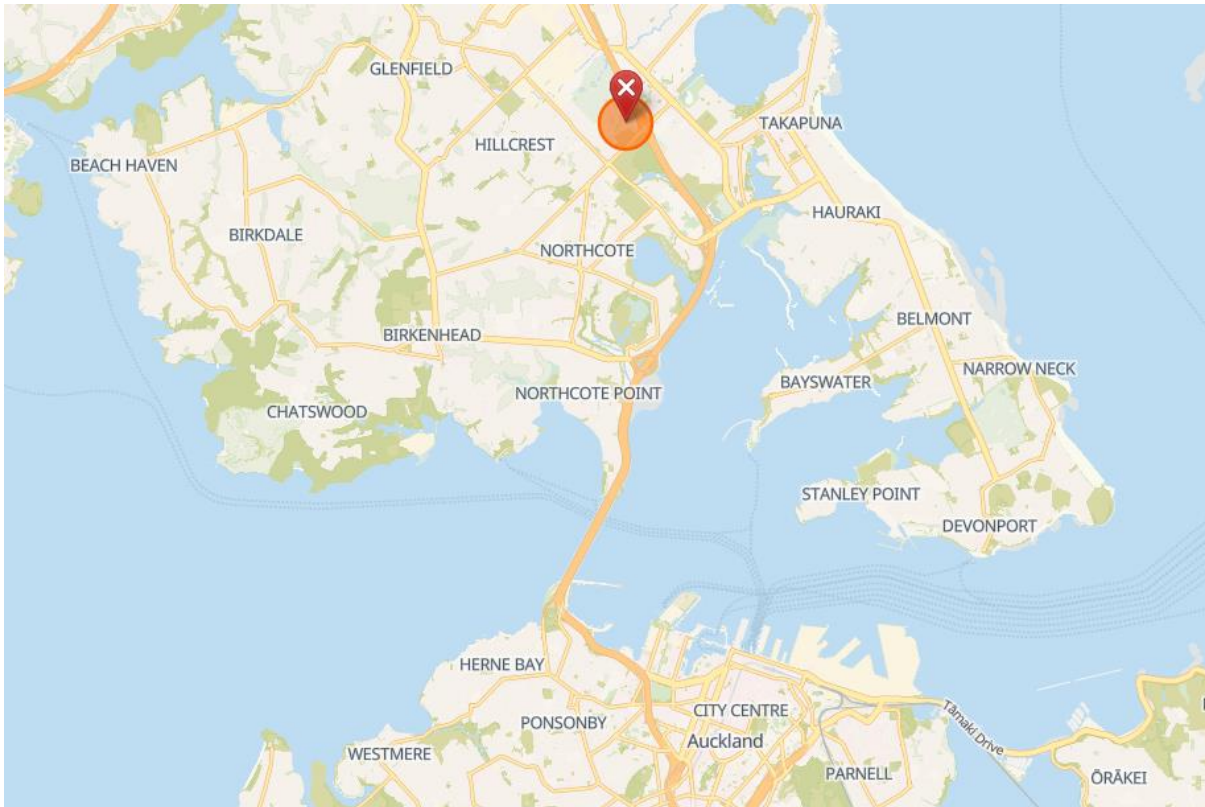
Actions for Minister's Office staff	<b>Return the signed briefing to:</b> <a href="mailto:FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz">FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz</a> <b>Send email to Ministers to invite written comments</b>
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 project 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

### Ministry for the Environment contacts:

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 <sup>st</sup> contact
Principal Author	Rebecca Burton		
Acting Manager	Ben Bunting	s 9(2)(a)	
Acting General Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	✓

## Project location

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**Figure 1:** Site location illustrated by red point

## Key messages

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1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Auckland Council – Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience Department (the applicant) to refer the Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. At this stage you can either decline an application for the reasons set out section 21, or provide the application to, and invite comments from, the parties identified in section 17. If you do not decline the application, you will receive a further briefing following receipt of comments, to support your final decision on whether to refer the project.
3. The project involves the development of flood resilience infrastructure works across approximately 50.91 hectares of reserve land within A F Thomas Park, located in Wairau Valley, Auckland.
4. The applicant states that during the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods, the Wairau catchment (including Wairau Valley, Milford, Glenfield and Tōtara Valley) experienced severe flooding and damage, particularly in residential areas of Tōtara Vale, Sunnynook and Nile Road, and commercial areas on Wairau Road and upstream of A F Thomas Park. There were two fatalities in the catchment during this weather event. The applicant considers this project delivers regionally significant flood management infrastructure that responds directly to the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods.
5. The project comprises:
  - a. flood resilience infrastructure works, including:

- i. excavation of the park to increase flood storage capacity
    - ii. creation of a wetland and dry flood storage areas
    - iii. modifications to an existing dam (reducing height, increasing storage, adding spillway)
    - iv. construction of a new spillway channel to optimise flood flow storage and release
    - v. stream reclamation and diversion of an unnamed stream
    - vi. vegetation removal and ground reshaping
    - vii. establishment of a temporary construction laydown area.
  - b. reserve reinstatement, including:
    - i. site stabilisation and landscaping
    - ii. construction of new multi-use maintenance accessways
    - iii. restoration of recreational areas.
6. The applicant seeks the following approvals under the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:
- a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
  - b. wildlife approval under the Wildlife Act 1953.
7. The applicant currently holds a resource consent for a dam within the project area (Consent Reference: 33083), which is valid until 31 October 2040. They have confirmed that, once the new dam consent is granted, they will seek to cancel the existing consent outside the fast-track approvals process.
8. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
9. We have decided the application is complete and complies with section 14 of the Act, as the application complies with section 13 requirements, may be capable of satisfying the criteria in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity. The applicable fee and levy have been paid.
10. We recommend you progress consideration of the referral application to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite written comments from the parties prescribed in section 17(1) of the Act being:
- a. Auckland Council as the relevant local authority
  - b. the Minister for the Environment
  - c. the Minister of Conservation and the Minister of Climate Change as the other relevant portfolio Ministers
  - d. the Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agency
  - e. the identified Māori groups listed in Appendix 3.
11. We recommend that you invite written comments from the additional parties under section 17(5) of the Act (their relevance to the project is explained in Table A).
- a. the Chief Executive of Vector Limited
  - b. the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited

- c. the Chief Executive of New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA)
  - d. the Minister for Auckland
  - e. the Minister for Regional Development
  - f. the Minister for Economic Growth.
12. As the project area includes public conservation land (as defined in the Act), we note you must obtain a report from the Director-General of Conservation in accordance with section 19(1) of the Act.

### Action sought

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13. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

### Signature

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Frame', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Stephanie Frame  
**Acting General Manager, Investment Strategy and Operations**

**Table A: Stage 1 analysis**

Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Location			
	Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 (the project)	Auckland Council – Healthy Waters and Flood Resilience Department (the applicant)	<p>An area of approximately 50.91 hectares known as A F Thomas Park (an Auckland Council owned asset held under the Reserves Act 1977) at 21 Northcote Road, and 17, 17A, 17B and 17C Silverfield Lane, located in Wairau Valley, Auckland.</p> <p>The project area is legally described as Lot 1 DP 150598, Lot 3 DP 150598, Lot 4 DP 150598, Lot 8 DP 150598, Lot 8 DP 101760, Lot 2 DP 150598, Lot 5 DP 150598, Lot 6 DP 150598, Lot 7 DP 150598, and Part Allot 103 PSH OF Takapuna.</p>			
Project description	<p>The project involves the development of flood resilience infrastructure works across approximately 50.91 hectares of reserve land within A F Thomas Park, located in Wairau Valley, Auckland.</p> <p>The project comprises:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. flood resilience infrastructure works, including:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. excavation of the park to increase flood storage capacity</li> <li>ii. creation of a wetland and dry flood storage areas</li> <li>iii. modifications to an existing dam (reducing height, increasing storage, adding spillway)</li> <li>iv. construction of a new spillway channel to optimise flood flow storage and release</li> <li>v. stream reclamation and diversion of an unnamed stream</li> <li>vi. vegetation removal and ground reshaping</li> <li>vii. establishment of a temporary construction laydown area.</li> </ol> </li> <li>b. reserve reinstatement, including:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. site stabilisation and landscaping</li> <li>ii. construction of new multi-use maintenance accessways</li> <li>iii. restoration of recreational areas.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>The applicant seeks the following approvals under the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)</li> <li>b. wildlife approval under the Wildlife Act 1953.</li> </ol>					
Consultation undertaken	As required by section 11, the applicant has consulted with:					
	<p><i>Relevant local authorities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auckland Council</li> </ul>	<p><i>Relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki</li> <li>• Ngāti Maru</li> <li>• Ngāti Pāoa</li> <li>• Ngāti Tamaterā</li> <li>• Ngāti Te Ata</li> <li>• Ngāti Whanaunga</li> <li>• Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara</li> <li>• Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei</li> <li>• Te Ākitai Waihoua</li> <li>• Te Kawerau ā Maki</li> <li>• Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua</li> </ul>	<p><i>Relevant MACA groups</i></p> <p>Not applicable to the site</p>	<p><i>Ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou</i></p> <p>Not applicable to the site</p>	<p><i>Relevant administering agencies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Conservation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Holder of land to be exchanged</i></p> <p>Not applicable</p>
Section 22 assessment criteria						
<p>The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]</p>	<p>You may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant.</p> <p>The applicant considers the project, being flood resilience infrastructure works in the Auckland region, is an infrastructure project that will have significant regional benefits for the reasons outlined below.</p> <p><i>The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]</i></p> <p>The applicant states that the Blue-Green Network Ngā Wairau Project is listed in the 2025/2026 Auckland Council Annual Plan, confirming its status as a priority project in a local government plan. The applicant states that central government has approved a Crown funding contribution of 62% of the total project costs, and they consider the timely delivery of this project is a high priority for Crown under the Auckland North Island Weather Events funding agreement between Crown and Auckland Council.</p>					

	<p><i>Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]</i>  The applicant states that the project delivers regionally significant flood management infrastructure through approximately 550,000 cubic metres of additional flood storage capacity, directly addressing demonstrated natural hazard risk and supporting recovery from the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods. The applicant also considers the project enables the continued functioning of existing regionally and nationally significant infrastructure, including Watercare's wastewater assets, State Highway 1, and Vector/Transpower electricity infrastructure, which they note rely on the project for long-term resilience and continued operation.</p> <p><i>Will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020) [s22(2)(a)(iii)]</i>  The applicant considers the project meets this criterion as, although housing is not proposed, the works will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment that provides for the health and safety of people and their communities as required by Objective 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD). The applicant also considers the project increases resilience of the urban environment to the current and future effects of climate change, upholding Objective 8 and Policy 1 of the NPS-UD.</p> <p><i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i>  The applicant's analysis concludes that the project will deliver significant economic benefits, with a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) slightly above 1, which indicates that the benefits outweigh the costs. The applicant states the avoidance of property damage made up 27% to 87% of the total benefits depending on the assumptions used followed by a reduction in the operating costs associated with the golf course. Other benefits noted by the applicant include the creation of open space, avoidance of flood related fatalities, recreational health benefits and an increase in property value.</p> <p><i>Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]</i>  The applicant states that the project will deliver significant climate change adaptation and natural hazard risk reduction benefits. The applicant considers the project is designed to increase flood storage capacity by approximately 550,000 cubic metres, directly addressing the severe flooding experienced in the Wairau catchment during the 2023 Auckland Anniversary event. The applicant considers hydraulic modelling demonstrates that the proposed works will substantially lower flood levels in both upstream commercial and downstream residential areas, with resilience tested against future climate scenarios involving increased rainfall and temperature. The applicant further notes the creation of wetlands and improved stormwater management enhances ecological resilience and supports recovery from past and future natural hazard events. The applicant concludes that the project also incorporates ongoing monitoring and mitigation measures to manage groundwater, land settlement, and water quality risks, ensuring long-term protection for critical infrastructure and communities.</p> <p><i>Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]</i>  The applicant states the project provides the opportunity to create a wetland thereby restoring the ecological values that were present before urbanisation, delivering positive environmental effects on local biodiversity, habitat and ecosystem functioning. The applicant further notes that potential adverse effects on the environment can be appropriately mitigated and managed to an acceptable level, resulting in no significant adverse effects on the environment and substantial environmental benefit.</p> <p><i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i>  The applicant states the project is consistent with key objectives and policies of the Auckland Unitary Plan, aligns with the National Policy Statements, and is listed as a priority in Auckland Council's 2025/2026 Annual Plan and other local strategies, which they consider demonstrates strong consistency across the planning framework hierarchy.</p>		
<b>Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]</b>	<p><i>Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]</i>  The applicant states that using the fast-track approvals process will significantly reduce consenting timeframes compared to the normal RMA process. The applicant considers the project to be complex, requiring multiple approvals, and they consider the fast-track approvals process consolidates these, avoiding lengthy appeals and court processes. The applicant considers this will enable construction to begin much sooner—potentially saving at least two years or more—delivering urgent flood management infrastructure and associated community benefits much earlier than would be possible under normal processes.</p> <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i>  The applicant states that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the process. The applicant considers the project is well-defined, has strong local and central government support, and is not expected to create undue complexity or delays for the fast-track system. The applicant states they are an experienced public authority with a track record of compliance, and they consider the project's scope and consenting requirements are clear and manageable within the fast-track framework.</p>		
<b>Minister invites comments</b>	<p><i>You <b>must</b> copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant local authority: Auckland Council</li> <li>Minister for the Environment</li> <li>Other relevant portfolio Ministers (and their relevance to the project): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minister of Conservation – as the project requires wildlife approval under the Wildlife Act 1953</li> <li>Minister of Climate Change – as the project, for flood resilience infrastructure works in the Auckland region, is intended by the applicant to support climate change adaptation in response to an increase in extreme weather events such as the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods</li> </ul> </li> <li>Relevant administering agency: Department of Conservation</li> <li>The Māori groups identified in Appendix 3.</li> </ol>	<p><i>You <b>may</b> copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited – the applicant has identified the Wairau Road Electricity Substation adjoins the project area and has been impacted by flood events in the past. The Requiring Authority for the electricity substation is Transpower.</li> <li>The Chief Executive of New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) - the project area adjoins an NZTA asset being State Highway 1 Auckland Northern Motorway</li> <li>The Chief Executive of Vector Limited – the applicant identifies that power cables owned by Vector are located within the north-western area of the project area</li> <li>The Minister for Auckland – as the project is proposed as a direct response to the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods, an extreme weather event for the Auckland region</li> <li>The Minister for Regional Development</li> <li>The Minister for Economic Growth</li> </ul>	<p><i>The Minister may request further information about a referral application from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies to be provided within the time frame specified in the request.</i></p> <p>We have not identified any further information to be sought, at this stage.</p>

Recommendations	Minister's decision
a. <b>Note</b> that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the relevant local authorities, the Minister for the Environment, any relevant Ministers, any relevant administering agencies and the Māori groups identified in the list provided.	Noted
b. <b>Note</b> that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any written comments on it from, the parties listed in section 17(1) but that you are required to do so if you do not decline the application under section 21 of the Act.	Noted
c. <b>Note</b> that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.	Noted
d. <b>Note</b> that if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame you are required to consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.	Noted
e. <b>Note</b> that section 20 of the Act permits you to request further information from the applicant or relevant local authorities or relevant administering agencies at any time before you decide whether to accept or decline an application.	Noted
f. <b>Agree</b> to progress the Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 project to our Stage 2 analysis (invite written comments and request section 18 Treaty report).	Yes / No
g. <b>Agree</b> to provide the application to, and invite written comments from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Auckland Council as the relevant local authority under section 17(1)(a)</li> <li>ii. Minister for the Environment under section 17(1)(b)</li> <li>iii. Minister of Conservation and Minister of Climate Change as the relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b)</li> <li>iv. Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agency under section 17(1)(c)</li> <li>v. The parties in Appendix 3 as the Māori groups under section 17(1)(d)</li> <li>vi. Any parties you are required to invite comments from under section 17(1)(d) and (e) who may be subsequently identified</li> </ul>	Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
h. <b>Agree</b> to provide the application to and invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Chief Executive of Vector Limited</li> <li>ii. The Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited</li> <li>iii. The Chief Executive of New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi</li> <li>iv. Minister for Auckland</li> <li>v. Minister for Regional Development</li> <li>vi. Minister for Economic Growth</li> </ul>	Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i. <b>Note</b> that section 19(1) of the Act requires you to obtain and consider a report in relation to the use of public conservation land for the project from the Director-General of Conservation.	Noted
j. <b>Note</b> that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence, other than to Ministers.	Noted
k. <b>Agree</b> to send the email to invite written comments from Ministers.	Yes / No

**Signed:**

Hon Chris Bishop  
**Minister for Infrastructure**

**Date:**

## Appendix 1: Statutory Framework Summary

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1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application, then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
  - a. give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
  - b. comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
  - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
  - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
  - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at this initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
  - a. the relevant local authorities,
  - b. the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers
  - c. the relevant administering agencies
  - d. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
  - e. the owners of Māori land in the project area:
  - f. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

## **Appendix 2: Application documents for Ngā Wairau – Stage 1 project**

### Appendix 3: List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

<b>Name of group</b>	<b>Type of group (section of Act)</b>
<b>Ngā Maunga Whakahii o Kaipara Development Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara Claims Settlement Act 2013
<b>Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei Claims Settlement Act 2012
<b>Te Kawerau Iwi Settlement Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Te Kawerau ā Maki Claims Settlement Act 2015
<b>Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Claims Settlement Act 2018
<b>Ngāti Tamaoho Settlement Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāti Tamaoho Claims Settlement Act 2018
<b>Ngāti Pāoa Iwi Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)) – Ngāti Pāoa Claims Settlement Act 2025
<b>Ngāti Maru Rūnanga Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d)) 18(2)(d)
<b>Ngāti Tamaterā Treaty Settlement Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
<b>Ngāti Te Ata Claims Support Whānau Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
<b>Ngaati Whanaunga Incorporated Society</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a))
<b>Ngaati Whanaunga Ruunanga Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
<b>Hako Tūpuna Trust</b>	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
<b>Te Ākitai Waiohua Settlement Trust</b>	Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
<b>Te Ākitai Waiohua Waka Taua Inc</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a))
<b>Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); mandated entity (s18(2)(d))
<b>Te Patukirikiri Iwi Trust</b>	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a)), mandated entity (s18(2)(d)).